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FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2027
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SECDEF GATES' VISIT TO JORDAN

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) King Abdullah and the Jordanian government are looking forward to your visit here. The Jordanian government plays a key role in the administration's top priorities in the region, including the effort in Iraq, reviving progress toward a Palestinian-Israeli settlement and broader Arab-Israeli peace, counterterrorism, and reform.

¶2. (C) Over the past fifty years, U.S.-Jordan military-to-military ties have matured into a cornerstone of the relationship between our two governments. FY 2007 foreign military financing (FMF) for Jordan is approximately \$210 million, and is being used chiefly to continue modernization of Jordan's ground and air forces, and enhance border security to counter terrorism. The GOJ is seeking supplemental FMF on the order of \$100 million, and bases this request chiefly on what it perceives to be the growing potential for an increasingly-isolated Syria to threaten Jordan militarily.

¶3. (S) You should expect some of these topics to be on the King's mind when you meet with him:

-- The Palestinian-Israeli conflict: As he told a joint session of Congress March 7, King Abdullah views this as exacerbating most of the region's other conflicts, and dangerously exploited by our common enemies in the region. In private, he adds that without visible progress toward an Israeli-Palestinian settlement, his position in Jordan is weaker; other regional moderates are likewise hurt. The King is energetically supporting Secretary Rice's efforts on this issue and efforts to forge broader Arab-Israeli engagement. He knows that resolving this conflict will not eliminate other threats to our interests in the region, but believes it will enable the region's moderates to turn the tables on its extremist leaders.

-- Iran: The King views Iran as the major strategic threat in the region. He is pleased that moderate Arab leaders share a consensus on the point, and is working closely with the Saudis.

-- Iraq: The Jordanian leadership believes a bad outcome for the U.S. would be a serious threat to Jordan, and is increasingly anxious about events there. Jordan has provided concrete logistical and political assistance to our Iraq effort since 2002, and the King is ready to help further where he can. While he has a good personal relationship with PM Maliki, he questions the commitment and ability of Maliki's governing coalition to work toward a political solution of sectarian conflict. He has actively encouraged Sunni elements - especially western tribesmen - to stop attacking the coalition, enter the political process, and focus on the real threat, Iran.

-- Saudi Arabia: The King has improved Jordanian-Saudi ties markedly since coming to the throne, and Riyadh is now providing Jordan with aid on the order of \$300 million annually. The Mecca agreement which brought Hamas and Fatah together in the Palestinian National Unity Government, however, caught the Jordanians off guard. Jordanian officials are working closely with Saudi counterparts to concentrate financial and political support behind Abu Mazen and Dahlan.

¶4. (C) While USG-GOJ ties are as strong as ever, the Jordanian public dislikes Jordan's close alignment with U.S. policies. But most politically-aware Jordanians give the King credit - sometimes grudgingly - for keeping Jordan secure and prosperous in a dangerous region in difficult times. GDP growth has exceeded six percent for three years running now, in part due to the King's economic liberalization policies, our FTA agreement, and the success of USAID-supported economic strategies focused on private sector growth. But populists complain these same policies have hurt the poor most. Jordan's legal Islamist opposition will likely score well in municipal elections in July and parliamentary elections in late 2007. The King resisted his more security-minded advisors' pleas to cancel the polls, both because he is committed to gradual democratization, and because he believes his supporters can come out on top.

¶5. (SBU) The country team will transmit another, more detailed message providing further background on the U.S.-Jordan military-to-military relationship.

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